

PRSRJ STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
Permit No. 3937

Capitol News 2005



Joseph.Mann@cga.ct.gov
www.cga.ct.gov/hdo/HDOI40.asp

Please Keep in Touch
Capitol: 800-842-8267 (Toll-Free)
Home: (203) 853-4518
Representative Joseph E. Mann
Legislative Office Building, Room 4022
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Some of the other highlights from this legislative session:

EDUCATION:

- *School Readiness Initiatives
- *Increase in Capitol Scholarships
- *Food Allergy Action Plans

SENIORS:

- *Department of Aging Reestablished
- *Federal Prescription Drug Program Response
- *Transportation for Seniors

ENVIRONMENT:

- *Clean Car Incentives
- *Bi-State L.I. Sound Committee
- *CT Clean Diesel Plan
- *Motorboat Noise Limits

BUSINESS AND LABOR

- *Smart Growth
- *Minimum Wage Increase
- *Assistance for Sub Base Contractors
- *Energy Independence Initiative

HEALTHCARE:

- *Mental Health Initiatives
- *Medical Malpractice Reform
- *External Insurance Appeals

PUBLIC & CONSUMER SAFETY:

- *Credit Report & Identity Theft Security
- *Fire Sprinklers in Nursing Homes
- *Accurate Posting of Gas Prices

Call for your free copy of Acts Affecting:

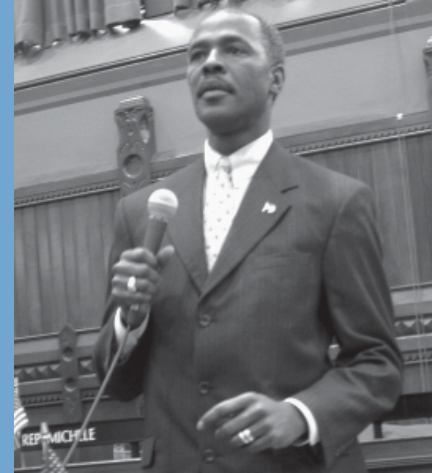
Seniors
Education
Veterans
Business &
Children
Major Acts
Living will packets

1 (800) 842-8267

If you would like additional information about any of these new laws, please call.

State Representative Joseph E. Mann

Capitol News 2005



Norwalk ~ 140th District

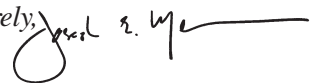
Dear Friends:

This 2005 session has come to a close and with it we were able to approve a fiscally responsible budget that was on time and increases aid to cities in order to provide local property tax relief. In total, Norwalk will receive an additional **\$253,068** in ECS (Education) Aid and another **\$126,794** in town road aid. All together Norwalk will receive an additional **\$868,543** in Statutory Aid. In addition to increases in education funding Norwalk will also see additional funding for various school construction projects totaling in excess of **\$16.8 million**.

In order to pay for these increases we made sure it was done in an equitable way by stopping increases in the alcohol, cigarette and gasoline tax in the Governor's proposed budget. These increases would have unfairly and disproportionately hurt the poor and middle class. Instead, we found a fairer and more equitable way to balance the budget by taxing estates in excess of \$2 million. We also increased the property tax credit from \$350 to \$400 starting in 2006.

This year we also made a bold 10-year, \$1.3 billion commitment to address our state's transportation needs. Under the bill we will add 340 or more new rail cars to Metro North, make \$187 million in interstate highway improvements and \$150 million in improvements to other roads. With more rail cars and improvements to I-95, Norwalk will see these improvements first hand. In fact I joined the Governor at the South Norwalk Train Station, the place she chose to make her announcement regarding transportation funding.

Some of the other highlights from this legislative session are outlined in this year's **Capitol News** report. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or would like any further information.

Sincerely,


School Construction Funding for Norwalk

Norwalk High School	\$11,839,750
Roton Middle School	\$2,112,940
Columbus Elementary School	\$1,366,125
Tracey School	\$1,566,490

Bond Funding (subject to approval of the State Bond Commission)

Norwalk Community College	\$3,254,941
Norwalk Martime Museum (over 2 years)	\$1,250,000
Bus Depot for Norwalk Transit District	\$250,000
Boathouse for Norwalk River Rowing Assoc	\$250,000



Housing

HOUSING TRUST FUND



The act creates a Housing Trust Fund and authorizes the State Bond Commission to capitalize it by issuing up to \$100 million in bonds, with \$20 million effective each July 1, from 2005 to 2009. It establishes a Housing Trust Fund Program to expand affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income people and requires the bond proceeds to be used for this purpose.

“As Vice-Chair of the Select Committee on Housing, I am proud to have championed the following initiatives.”

IDENTIFICATION OF A LANDLORD

This legislation addresses a serious concern for tenants across the state – the problem of absentee landlords who are difficult for housing courts to locate when being cited for poor management, upkeep, health hazards and other housing code violations. This legislation would permit municipalities to require non-resident owners of rental property, or their agents, to maintain a current residential address on file in the municipality where the property is located. Further, the owner must inform the municipality of a residential address change.

Public Safety

CELL PHONE BAN

As of October 1st drivers are prohibited from using cell phones while driving, unless they have a hands free device or there is an emergency. A driver under 18 cannot use either a hand held or hands free cell phone. Violations of the law result in a \$100 fine. For first time offenders, however, the fine will not be imposed if the offender acquires a hands free device before the imposition of the fine.

POCKET BIKE RESTRICTIONS

Even though pocket bikes are only 16 inches tall, they are able to reach speeds of up to 40 miles an hour. The high speed and small structure of pocket bikes create a dangerous situation on our sidewalks and streets. This session we took action to restrict the use of mini-motorcycles on public roads, sidewalks, and other public property.

Education



Rep. Mann with graduates and members of the Norwalk Project Read program.

EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Continuing our commitment to education, this session we:

- ✓ Created an Early Childhood Education Cabinet to promote quality in childhood development and education.
- ✓ Established a state education resource center to encourage innovative education practices.
- ✓ Increased the per-pupil grant to charter schools.
- ✓ Increased the Capitol Scholarship Grant from \$2000 to \$3000 for those who attend in-state institutions.

“As a member of the Higher Education Committee I continue to work to increase opportunities for our youth.”

Health Care

HUSKY/MEDICAID CO-PAY

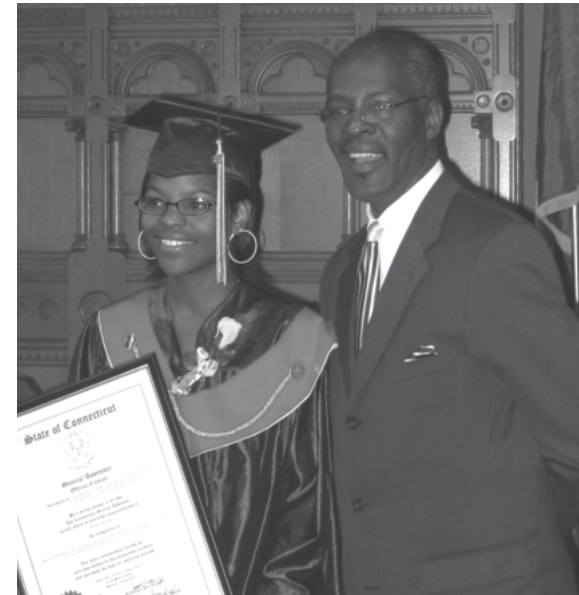
The HUSKY health care plan for adults has been restored for people up to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, allowing access to health care for over 30,000 people. The proposed \$3 co-pay for prescription drugs and the \$3 co-pay for doctor visits for Medicaid recipients has been eliminated. Health and food stamp benefits for legal immigrants have been restored.

HOSPITAL PATIENTS BILL OF RIGHTS

PA 05-128 requires a hospital to notify a patient of his or her rights under the hospital's participation condition of Medicare. Notification must be made to the patient, his or her guardian, or other legal representative. The notice must be written, with the rights listed, and provide information as to how the patient can file a complaint.

TEACHER'S RETIREMENT

This year we started to address the under-funding of the Teachers' Retirement System by using general fund and surplus appropriations of \$276.1 million in fiscal year '06 and \$286 million in fiscal year '07. These contributions provide approximately 70% of the actuarial certification. A good start but we must continue to work in order to fund our teacher's pension at full actuarial certification.



A special congratulations to Shauna-Kaye Reid of Norwalk. She was named Valedictorian of the 2005 Project Read graduating class.

Seniors

COMMITMENT TO OUR SENIORS

- ✓ The Department on Aging will become a separate agency and no longer part of the Department of Social Services as of January 2007.
- ✓ The Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders raised the asset limits from \$19,020 for singles to \$28,530 and from \$28,530 to \$38,040 for married couples.
- ✓ The maximum prize for bingo games designed for senior citizens increases from \$5 to \$20.
- ✓ Four towns with populations of at least 25,000 people can apply for grants of \$25,000 to develop a pilot program to provide rides in passenger cars for seniors who can no longer drive.

“My role on the Human Services Committee allows me to make sure we continue a commitment to our seniors.”

Children

CHILD RESTRAINTS/BOOSTER SEATS

As of October 1st, children ages 4 to 7, or who weigh less than 60 lbs. regardless of age, must use a booster seat anchored by a seat belt that includes a shoulder belt. The new law also requires children up to age 1, or until they reach 20 lbs., to be transported in rear-facing car seats.

PESTICIDES AT DAY CARE FACILITIES

State lawmakers took significant action to protect children's health, by restricting the use of lawn care pesticides at public and private preschools and elementary schools, and at child day care centers. The vulnerable, developing organs and nervous systems of children can be put at serious risk from unnecessary exposure to the chemical substances found in pesticides and insecticides.



Rep. Mann marching in Norwalk's Memorial Day Parade.

Veterans

INCOME TAX EXEMPTION

To provide more assistance to our veterans we have exempted 50% of federally taxable military retirement pay from the state income tax beginning in 2008.



MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND

To help military families when a spouse is called to active duty we will be setting up a Military Family Relief Fund to help those who are having trouble paying for such routine items as clothes, daycare, and transportation.

TOLL-FREE ASSISTANCE NUMBER

This session we established a toll-free number that families can call to get information on available services. The phone number will be in place by early fall. Individuals needing immediate help can call the National Guard Family Program at 1-860-524-4866 until that time.